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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000455

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARRSU](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN: TENSION OVER ARREST OF SENIOR SPLA GENERAL

REF: KHARTOUM 0443

Classified By: DCM ROBERTO POWERS FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) A top officer of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was placed under house arrest in Juba March 20, provoking tensions between troops loyal to the officer and other military elements. Juba was calm in the immediate aftermath of the arrest. The officer, Major General Obutu Mamur Mette, is one of the SPLA's four deputy chiefs of staff. The arrest came as Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) President Lt. Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit returned from a visit to Chad. It was not immediately clear what precipitated Mamur's arrest, which followed a meeting last week between Kiir and the SPLA high command. End Summary.

Tension in the Afternoon

¶2. (C) Mamur, the SPLA's deputy chief of staff for political and moral orientation, was arrested in the afternoon of March 20 at the SPLA general headquarters in central Juba. The arrest provoked "tensions" between forces loyal to Mamur and other military elements on the compound, according to an eyewitness. One of Mamur's close relatives subsequently told us that a contingent of about 50 troops providing personal protection to Mamur were disarmed. Mamur was then placed under house arrest. Mamur's relative told us that some of the disarmed troops had been moved to the construction site of a new interim general headquarters for the SPLA, about five kilometers north of Juba. The USG is constructing the interim headquarters, and USG contractors confirmed that about 12 military police had arrived at the site and taken control of the front gate, but they did not confirm whether or not additional disarmed troops were at the location. They confirmed that the situation at the construction site is calm.

¶3. (C) Juba remained tense but calm overnight. Several shops were closed in downtown Juba on the morning of March 21 in response to the uncertainty and there was a heavier than usual presence of military police. (Note: The military police presence may have been at least partially in response to the arrival of senior international donor representatives, including the CDA, for a conference on the morning of March 21.)

Powerful General

¶4. (C) Mamur is an ethnic Lotuka from Eastern Equatoria State. He is believed to retain the loyalty of a significant block of mainly Lotuka forces within the SPLA.

Those forces were reportedly asked to remain calm in the aftermath of the arrest, pending clarification of Mamur's status by GOSS President Kiir. Kiir apparently was not in Juba at the time of the arrest, but arrived shortly thereafter from a trip to Chad (septel).

¶5. (C) Mamur holds significant authority over matters of military justice and civil-military relations in his current post. He has also been entrusted with several sensitive matters in the last six months, including a key role in relations with the Ugandan army. Recently, SPLA Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Oyai Deng asked Mamur to chair a group of senior officers developing a strategic plan for the southern Sudanese army (Ref. A). Deng is nevertheless believed to have been the person who directly ordered Mamur's arrest. It is not known whether he consulted with Kiir prior to doing so. Before his arrest, Mamur had a reputation as a Kiir loyalist. Deng's relations with the GOSS president are more checkered (Ref. A) and there have been repeated rumors that Deng and other senior SPLA officers are slated for removal or reassignment.

Disharmony at the Top of the SPLA,
And Allegations of Corruption

¶6. (C) A security source told an FSN consultant that Mamur spoke forcefully about the shortcomings of senior SPLA leadership during a recent three-day conference of the SPLA high command in Juba (Ref. A). If the chief of staff and his four deputies have shortcomings, Mamur reportedly, argued, all should be fired. Kiir is also said to have criticized senior leadership during the meetings.

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¶7. (C) There are no reports that issues of corruption were addressed directly at the recent meeting of the high command. However, both Chief of Staff Deng and his deputy Mamur have been the subject of corruption allegations. Kiir has vowed to root out corruption within the SPLA and GOSS, and recently suspended his Finance Minister (Ref. B) pending an investigation of the suspect procurement of over 300 vehicles.

Comment

¶8. (C) The most critical question of the moment, still unresolved, is whether GOSS President Salva Kiir authorized the arrest of his senior commander. If he did, it points to a serious problem within the SPLA. If he did not, it points to a still more serious problem in Kiir's relationship to, and control over, his senior commanders.
End Comment.
HUME